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County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

12860 CROSSROADS PARKWAY SOUTH • CITY OF INDUSTRY, CALIFORNIA 91746
Tel (562) 908-8400 • Fax (562) 908-0459



BRYCE YOKOMIZO
Director

LISA NUÑEZ
Chief Deputy



Board of Supervisors
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ZEV YAROS LAVSKY
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Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

February 1, 2007

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

**SUBJECT: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: MOTION ON DEVELOPMENT OF
COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM TO IDENTIFY, PROSECUTE AND
PREVENT FOOD STAMP TRAFFICKING IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY
(BOARD ORDER #61-A – DECEMBER 12, 2006)**

On December 12, 2006, your Board directed our Department, in consultation with the District Attorney (DA) and the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee (CCJCC), to report on the development of a comprehensive program to identify, prosecute and prevent food stamp trafficking in Los Angeles County. In response to your motion, DPSS and representatives from the DA met with state and federal agencies to identify several options for identifying, prosecuting and preventing food stamp trafficking.

On January 17, 2007, DPSS met with representatives from the DA, and senior managers from FNS and the USDA/OIG to discuss what can be done to deter and investigate food stamp trafficking. While OIG informed us that they are responsible for the identification, investigation and prevention of trafficking by merchants; they did agree that they would be willing to work with us to identify ways in which we could work together to curb this type of fraud.

Among the areas discussed were expanding responsibility for investigation and prosecution and how the agencies involved can best work together on prevention activities. The departments agreed to explore the following and meet again to discuss:

- Funding sources which could be accessed by DPSS and the District Attorney for the investigation of food stamp trafficking, including funding for specialized training for DA Investigators by OIG staff on investigating merchant trafficking.
- The feasibility of obtaining funding to allow the District Attorney to prosecute some merchant trafficking cases referred by the Federal Prosecutor and the criteria for these referrals.
- Use of existing data on food stamp reports that could potentially alert us to food stamp trafficking.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"

Additionally, DPSS and the DA will work to implement the following activities which focus on the prevention of food stamp trafficking:

- Develop a Public Awareness Campaign, including posters in DPSS District Offices, advising applicants and recipients of the penalties for selling their food stamp benefits and how to report suspected food stamp trafficking by both vendors and recipients.
- Request WeTip include information on food stamp trafficking in its public service announcements and any brochures provided at events such as neighborhood fairs.
- Explore implementing an Administrative Disqualification Hearing process in Los Angeles County. Disqualification Hearings allow a penalty to be imposed on participants when the total food stamp over-issuance falls below the DA's minimum loss for prosecution in criminal court, however it should be noted that the standard of proof is the same as required for prosecution in criminal court.

Finally, we made a presentation to the CCJCC on January 17, informing them of the motion and the fact that we will keep them updated on our activities in this area.

We are hopeful that our collaborative efforts with the USDA and the DA will result in a reduction of food stamp trafficking in Los Angeles County. We will update your Board in 90 days.

BY:mh

c: Chief Administrative Officer
District Attorney
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

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Chief Deputy



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May 16, 2007

TO: Each Supervisor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "P. Browning", written over the "TO:" line.

FROM: Philip L. Browning, Director

**SUBJECT: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: MOTION ON DEVELOPMENT OF
COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM TO IDENTIFY, PROSECUTE AND
PREVENT FOOD STAMP TRAFFICKING IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY
(BOARD ORDER #61-A-DECEMBER 12, 2006)**

This is to provide an update to our initial report to your Board on February 1, 2007 relative to our efforts to develop a comprehensive program to identify, prosecute and prevent food stamp trafficking in Los Angeles County.

DPSS and representatives from the District Attorney (DA) met with state and federal agencies to discuss several options for combating food stamp trafficking in Los Angeles County. While representatives from the United States Department of Agriculture/Office of Inspector General (OIG) acknowledged responsibility for the identification, investigation and prosecution of food stamp trafficking, they did agree to work with DPSS and DA staff to identify ways in which we could work together to curb food stamp trafficking. Several options were identified and the following is an update on the progress on these activities:

- DA staff received training from OIG/Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) staff on critical areas in the investigation of food stamp trafficking.
- DA investigators received some food stamp trafficking referrals from OIG/FNS and are currently conducting investigations.
- Following completion of these investigations, DPSS and the DA will meet to assess funding needs and sources for continued investigation of referrals from the OIG/FNS.
- The WeTip public service announcements and the brochures have been revised to include information on reporting food stamp trafficking.

- DPSS continues to work on the development of a Public Awareness Campaign advising applicants and recipients of the penalties for selling their food stamp benefits and how to report suspected food stamp trafficking by both vendors and recipients.
- DPSS continues to explore the feasibility of implementing an Administrative Disqualification Hearing process in Los Angeles County, to allow a penalty to be imposed on participants when the food stamp loss falls below the DA's minimum loss for prosecution in criminal court.

We will provide your Board with an update in 90 days.

PLB:mh

c: Chief Administrative Officer
District Attorney
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

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August 22, 2007

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Philip L. Browning, Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Browning', written over the 'FROM' line.

SUBJECT: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: MOTION ON DEVELOPMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM TO IDENTIFY, PROSECUTE AND PREVENT FOOD STAMP TRAFFICKING IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY (BOARD ORDER #61-A-DECEMBER 12, 2006)

This is to provide an update to our letter to your Board on May 16, in response to the above motion directing DPSS, in consultation with the District Attorney (DA) and the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee (CCJCC), to report on the development of a comprehensive program to identify, prosecute and prevent Food Stamp trafficking in Los Angeles County.

- After receiving training from the Office of the Inspector General/Food and Nutrition Service (OIG/FNS) staff on critical areas in the investigation of Food Stamp trafficking, the District Attorney Recipient Welfare Fraud Unit entered into negotiations with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for a Memorandum of Understanding for obtaining Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to be used in the investigation of Food Stamp trafficking.
- Following completion of these investigations, DPSS and the DA will meet to assess funding needs and sources for continued investigation of referrals from the OIG/FNS.

Additionally DPSS is implementing the following activities identified by DPSS and the DA which focus on the prevention of Food Stamp trafficking. The following is an update on these activities:

- DPSS is developing posters and flyers advising applicants and participants of the consequences and penalties for fraud, including selling their Food Stamp benefits and how to report suspected Food Stamp trafficking by both vendors and recipients. The posters and flyers will be available for distribution by November 1, 2007.

Each Supervisor
August 22, 2007
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- DPSS procedures have been developed for implementing an Administrative Disqualification Hearing process in Los Angeles County, to allow a penalty to be imposed on participants when the Food Stamp loss falls below the DA's minimum loss for prosecution in criminal court. The target implementation date is December 31, 2007.

We are hopeful that the collaborative efforts outlined above will result in a reduction of Food Stamp trafficking in Los Angeles County. We will provide your Board with an update in 90 days following completion and assessment of the DA Investigation Unit's Food Stamp Trafficking pilot.

PLB:mh

c: Chief Executive Officer
Deputy CEO
District Attorney
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors



PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

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November 21, 2007

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Philip L. Browning, Director 

**SUBJECT: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: MOTION ON DEVELOPMENT OF
COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM TO IDENTIFY, PROSECUTE AND
PREVENT FOOD STAMP TRAFFICKING IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY
(BOARD ORDER #61-A-DECEMBER 12, 2006)**

This is to provide an update to our letter to your Board on August 22, 2007, in response to the above motion directing DPSS, in consultation with the District Attorney (DA) and the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee, to report on the development of a comprehensive program to identify, prosecute and prevent Food Stamp trafficking in Los Angeles County.

- The District Attorney Recipient Welfare Fraud Unit signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to obtain EBT cards to be used in the investigation of Food Stamp trafficking.
- As a result of one of these investigations, the District Attorney projects serving search warrants on a local market in early December 2007.
- Following completion of these investigations, DPSS and the DA will meet to assess funding needs and sources for continued investigation of referrals from the OIG/FNS.
- DPSS developed posters advising applicants and participants of the consequences and penalties for fraud, including selling their Food Stamp benefits and how to report suspected Food Stamp trafficking by both vendors and recipients. The posters will be distributed to DPSS district offices by the first week in December for display in the district lobby.

Each Supervisor
November 21, 2007
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We are hopeful that the collaborative efforts outlined above will result in a reduction of Food Stamp trafficking in Los Angeles County. We will provide your Board with an update following completion and assessment of the DA Investigation Unit's Food Stamp Trafficking pilot.

PLB:LL:mh

c: Chief Executive Officer
Deputy CEO
District Attorney
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors